

BOOK REVIEW

WILLIAM T. STEARN. 2002. **The Genus *Epimedium* and Other Herbaceous Berberidaceae including the Genus *Podophyllum***. (ISBN 0-88192-543-8, hdbk.) Timber Press, Inc., 133 S.W. Second Ave, Suite 450, Portland, OR 97204-3527. (Orders: www.timberpress.com, 503-227-2878, 1-800-327-5680, 503-227-3070 fax). \$49.95, 354 pp, 27 color paintings, 75 color photos, 31 line drawings, 7 b/w photos, 7 3/8" × 9 5/8".

Though *Epimedium* species have been cultivated for centuries in Asia, it is only relatively recently that the taxonomy has been understood, indeed in great part to the author of this book. William Stearn, who is probably best known for his other books, *Botanical Latin* and *Dictionary of Plant Names for Gardeners*, provides in his posthumous publication a comprehensive monograph of *Epimedium* species and cultivated hybrids. Other herbaceous Berberidaceae genera are treated in this book as well, including *Achlys*, *Bongardia*, *Caulophyllum*, *Diphylleia*, *Gymnospermium*, *Jeffersonia*, *Leontice*, *Ranzania*, and *Vancouveria*. A treatment of 14 species of *Podophyllum* is provided by Julian Shaw.

A historical introduction begins the book, in addition to a general description of the herbaceous genera in Berberidaceae and a key to these genera. The second chapter is filled with facts on touted medicinal properties, discovery and treatment of new species by 18th century botanists, and modern hybridization of species for cultivation. Interestingly, the genus was first described by Linneaus in 1753 when he described *Epimedium alpinum*, but it remained monotypic until 1821. Chapter three is an extensive description of morphologic characters, including rhizome, stem, foliage, flowers and fruits. Stearn elaborates on the importance of floral morphology with three extensive figures that include line drawings of the flowers and spurred petals of each species. Next, Stearn explains his classification system for *Epimedium*, which comprises two subgenera and four sections and his biogeographical hypotheses for present distributions of *Epimedium*. The taxonomic treatment of *Epimedium* in chapter seven is comprehensive, beginning appropriately with a key to species and following with descriptions of 54 species and 20 hybrids. Each species description includes eponymy, synonymy, diagnostic characteristics, illustration citations and geographic distribution. In addition, each species has an illustration and/or a color photograph to accompany the text. The rest of the book is dedicated to description of the other aforementioned herbaceous taxa. Descriptions of these taxa follow the same format as *Epimedium*.

Commonly called Barren-worts, *Epimedium* species are increasingly popular in North American landscapes and woodland gardens. Clearly, Stearn himself was interested in the horticulture of herbaceous Berberidaceae, since this book is littered with comments on the history of their cultivation. The comprehensive information provided here by Stearn and collaborators makes it a worthwhile read for a variety of audiences. The importance of this book to taxonomy notwithstanding, people interested in species of herbaceous Berberidaceae, the origins of *Epimedium* and other taxa, and the cultivation of hybrids should consider adding this book to their library.—Amy Trauth Nare, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, 509 Pecan Street, Fort Worth, TX, 76102-4060, U.S.A., amy_trauth@yahoo.com.